Five Times Jonathan Byers Did Not Cry by bibliophxle

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Jonathan Byers knew he was sad far too often for a boy his age. He knew he cried more than he cared to admit, but he knew there were exactly five times in his short life when he found the willpower - or whatever bullshit an outsider looking in would call it- to choke back a sob and look as stone faced as he could. Maybe it wasn't willpower. Maybe it was numbness. Maybe it was his instinct of retaliation towards all the crap life threw at him. Maybe he just didn't want to seem weak.

Five Times Jonathan Byers Did Not Cry

Author's Note:

> Feel free to leave requests for other works, I'd love to get back into writing.

Jonathan Byers was very familiar with two different types of sad.

There was the tearful, gut-wrenching kind that came with grief or panic and resulted in a broken voice. And there was the steady, low-humming sad which was just…*constantly there*. It accompanied him with every move he made and maybe it wasn't worth crying for, but its intensity was certainly amplified with 3 AM insomnia and anxiety for the next day.

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1) Joyce used to call him the Prince of Peace when he was younger. With all the chaos and fights and screaming and *oh god Lonnie, please stops*, Jonathan was the unspoken peacekeeper in the household. His parents figured they had to at least try to keep their shit together for the kid; *if not for your marriage, do it for your child*, Father Charles would say.

Jonathan would crawl up to his mom's lap after pressing his ear

against a wall in time to hear Lonnie calling her things most husbands wouldn't dare to say to their wives. Joyce smiled that sad smile of hers. The kind when her mouth was smiling and strangely, her eyes were, too. Not in the genuinely happy way that Jonathan knew, but in the way she was happy because at least she knew the one unconditional love in her life was her son.

Jonathan had a complicated relationship with his dad. Lonnie did everything halfheartedly when it came to Jonathan. He would teach him things like how to throw a punch with his thumb outside the fist instead of inside and gave him a sip of beer after telling him they'd have to keep it a secret from Joyce. Jonathan was aware that the other boys in school received more love from their fathers than he did. It felt terrible and it contributed to the list of Why Jonathan Byers is a Freak, so he would do his best to block it out. *You're a good boy, Jonathan. Your parents love you, Jonathan. Don't cry, Jonathan*. He ultimately decided that no, the other boys did not receive more love than he did; it was just a different type of love. Lonnie rarely showed it, but there was the unspoken fact that Jonathan had a special place in his father's heart.

Maybe it was the way he would peek around the door frame at Lonnie, who was holding a scotch after another fight with Joyce and their eyes would meet. Lonnie's would become nearly as sad as Jonathan's were. Maybe he remembered that his son wasn't yet in the time in his life when he could turn away from the hurt he saw his mother feel and the anger in his father he was deathly afraid of, especially when it was directed toward Joyce and took the form of ugly, ugly words which would break her more every time.

The next morning, everything was well. They weren't a family who talked about feelings and 'girly crap like that' as Lonnie would call it. They were the type to sweep things under the rug until another reason to yell would surface and the whole process would start again. Jonathan was so tired.

Jonathan didn't cry when Lonnie finally left. He tried to convince himself that it really was for the best. No more of that terrible feeling of urgency in the pit of his stomach when his parents fought and the way he would scamper back to his room or Will's after standing at the end of the hallway to hear what the fight was about this time. His

heart would drop when he saw his father; shirt unbuttoned, looking exhausted and unshaven, holding a drink in one hand and forming a fist with the other. No more sliding down the wall of his room, feeling numb but feeling his heart beating too quickly to be normal and no more wondering what having two parents who loved you and each other really felt like. Because this wasn't it.

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2) Jonathan Byers loved his family more than anything. There really wasn't much else to love more. Will had a special place in his heart, though. He was protective of his little brother but it killed him that he couldn't always protect him. Jonathan saw the way the other boys at school pushed the kid around, called him a fag and snickered at the comments about his dad not even wanting him around. It broke Jonathan's heart because he knew that Will wasn't as okay with it as he claimed to be. He knew because he had to put on a brave face, as well. He knew what it was like to be pointed and stared at his whole life. The day Will came home with a black eye, Jonathan marched right over to his car and drove halfway to Nick McDougle's house. When he realized what he was doing, he pulled over and tried to breathe. *Deep breaths, Jonathan,* his mom would say whenever he had a panic attack. *Just breathe for me, baby.*

Instead of assaulting a kid half his size, (which would certainly land him in a holding cell over at the police station) he drove back home to his little brother. Jonathan played his favourite song from The Clash while Will held some ice to his eye. His heart hurt and he lost track of how many times he blinked back tears that night. He danced to the music with his brother until a genuine smile resurfaced onto Will's face. Eventually, onto Jonathan's as well, but he stayed up for hours that night, angry at the world and angry at the same type of mouthbreathers who never gave him a chance and now came after his brother.

Jonathan Byers had a heart of gold, but it felt too heavy to bear.

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3) Jonathan did not cry when he went to Lonnie's house to look for Will.

He did not cry when he found nothing but a dirty house and a new woman in his father's life and he did not cry when the familiar feeling of unwantedness returned the moment he saw Lonnie. Jonathan had gone almost eleven months without speaking to his father, mainly because he had finally realized that he was just another unnecessary form of toxic in his life. He didn't trust him. He didn't owe him anything. He was there for Will, but from the looks of it, one of their parents couldn't give less of a shit while the other was making herself crazy.

The last time Lonnie was an issue in Jonathan's life, it turned him into something he was afraid to become. Joyce had just gotten off the phone with Lonnie, who was asking to see his sons.

"I'm not spending time with that son of a bitch," Jonathan had blurted out. He was overcome with panic, recalling the last time they were together. Lonnie had gotten drunk and called him an 'antisocial faggot who wouldn't get anywhere in life.' He came after Will too, with his ugly drunken words. That was the first time Jonathan ever hit another person.

He drove himself and Will back to Hawkins in the middle of the night.

"He's your father." That was what set Jonathan off. He was his father, sure. But he didn't owe him anything. Jonathan's hand was curled up into a tight fist, thumb outside, just as Lonnie had taught him. He realized Joyce's eyes were fearful and she shrunk back. *Jonathan realized he looked just like his father.*

"I'm not him," he whimpered. "I will never be him."

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4) Jonathan Byers wasn't the type to keep friends.

He really wasn't sure how. It wasn't like he never had friends. There were a few kids he remembered bonding with between the ages of 3-8 but none really stuck around after observing that Jonathan much rather spend time alone and hang around in Castle Byers.There was Eric from work whom he was friendly with, but he observed that occurred if he was asked to cover a shift or for some other favor.

Most friendships are temporary anyway, he would think. Jonathan liked to convince himself he really was happier alone and that was partially true, but he couldn't deny the jab of pain he felt in his chest and the instinct to look at the ground when he passed a group of laughing teenagers. He couldn't deny the feeling of exhilaration when he successfully managed to make somewhat pleasant conversation with someone whose intentions were not to snide him. He couldn't deny how much better he felt when he was in the company of a person whom he genuinely trusted and liked. He couldn't deny he wanted to feel it more.

Nancy Wheeler was that person. He grew up with the girl and she was one of the few people who didn't throw crumpled up paper at him or made snarky remarks to her friends while her eyes burned a hole into his head. She was a nice girl. A good girl who never really bothered with him, which he appreciated. Their brothers were best friends so Jonathan would occasionally find himself standing awkwardly in her house while he waited for Will to pack his things. They traded civil nods when they crossed paths outside of school, but they weren't friends. Until recently. At the time, Jonathan didn't consider them friends, more allies. A team of not-so-complete-strangers who came together to find out what monster took his brother and her best friend. Even if he was not sure if they were not friends yet, he had a strange, unfamiliar feeling when he was with her. He definitely cared about her. Jonathan felt silly, becoming so attached to a person in a matter of a few days. Maybe it was because he was so closed up all the time that when someone wriggled their way in, they automatically became part of his solar system. Stupid,

stupid, stupid.

Jonathan always cried when he panicked. He cried when his anxiety got bad and he cried when he was frustrated. He cried even more when the two elements came together.

He did not cry when Nancy disappeared in the woods and all he could hear were her screams. Instead, he ran around frantically, calling her name, determined not to lose possibly the only friend he had. He did not cry when he pulled her out of the tree and held her while she cried and clung on to him as tightly as she could. He didn't cry when reality started to sink in as she was still in his arms. She had seen something terrible and they were no longer safe.

Jonathan lay in her bed that night, staring at the frightened girl, who just looked so tired. He was tired, too and he thought about how he wanted her closer. Jonathan wanted to hold Nancy close to him until that look on her face was replaced by slumber. He fell asleep first.

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5) When Will was brought back from the Upside-Down, it took time for it to register in Jonathan's mind. The world was moving in slow motion and he wasn't sure what was real anymore.

"Nancy? Do you see him, too?" he asked without taking his eyes off the small boy. He didn't even want to blink, afraid that his brother would be torn away from home once again.

"That's him, Jonathan. That's Will."

Jonathan did not cry. He fell to the ground and breathed heavily into his hands while Nancy told him his brother was okay, he was safe, and they were going to get him help. The world was spinning and somehow, he found himself in a hospital room, staring at a little boy.

"…than? Jonathan, sweetie, can you hear me?" He was brought to his senses by his mother's voice. She looked so tired, but so beautiful.

Joyce looked happy and was no longer staring at him with those big, frantic eyes. Their family was back together.

Three months later, things had gone back to normal. Well, as normal as things could be. The press had finally quieted down and Will was happy to be back with his friends. For Jonathan, though, his perception of normal had changed a quite a bit. He had friends. He wasn't alone so much anymore. He had Nancy and even Steve, who had ditched the assholes he'd been hanging around for the last ten years.

He liked talking to his friends. He listened to Mike talk about Eleven and the crazy adventures they had in the short time she was in Hawkins. Jonathan would talk to Hopper often, as he stopped by the Byers' household to check on Joyce and her boys.

Nancy was his best friend, though. When the chaos and grieving blew over, she was short a best friend and she learned Jonathan never really had one. They would talk about all sorts of things. They were happy in each other's company, even if their friendship was built on a traumatic event no one would really forget. Nancy had nightmares more often than he did. Possibly because she had actually been to the Upside-Down and because she lost Barbara, and maybe because his insomnia had gotten ten times worse.

She called him a few times in the middle of the night and he drove over.

They would lie in her bed like the first time, only the trauma wasn't as fresh and they had become closer. Sometimes they would just talk quietly about nonsense. Jonathan would tell her about how Will played his mixtape almost constantly and how it was driving Joyce crazy. She would tell him about how she broke up with Steve, but still remained good friends.

Eventually, both of them drifted off to sleep with little space between them. Sometimes he would stumble in through her window and just hold her hand. And after some time, Jonathan lay on his back, staring at Nancy's ceiling while she lay her head on his chest, her arm strewn

across his middle. Her steady breaths put him to sleep.

They would take walks at lunch or after school. They still couldn't muster up the courage to go to the woods, but they found other nice, quiet places to go. Nancy's favourite spot was an old bridge at the edge of town. They didn't talk much there, mostly stared down at the water.

Jonathan liked to look at Nancy. He liked the way he could sometimes tell what she was thinking and how other times, he couldn't. She didn't really notice; or so he thought.

"Nancy?" He said quietly.

"Yeah?"

"What are you thinking?"

She was beautiful and she was so close. Nancy finally looked back up at him and said nothing. Her eyes darted to Jonathan's lips before hesitantly moving closer.

He looked back at her. She filled the gap between them. And they were kissing.

He was gentle with her, afraid to touch her more than she was okay with, but if it was Jonathan, her best friend whom she had unintentionally fallen in love with, Nancy was okay with it.

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Jonathan went home that night to his own perception of normal. Maybe Lonnie wasn't there to join them for dinner, maybe he would always find comfort in being alone; it didn't mean he was subjected to loneliness. He had his mother, Will, Nancy and other good people whose care was mutual.

Jonathan Byers didn't cry. Things were pretty damn good.